

manners are an essential element in the type. A gentleman is one who has been educated to conform to the type, and that he has the *cachet* is indicated by his admission to the group. Novels develop and transmit the ideal; clubs are the tribunal of it. It is a floating notion which varies with the mores. The modern reader finds very few cases in Greek literature of what he can recognize as gentlemen. Orestes in the *Electra* of Euripides opens the discussion of what makes the worth of a man, but after saying that it is not wealth or poverty, and not valor in war, he flinches the question and says that it is better to leave it untouched. The peasant, married to Electra, certainly acts the gentleman. He also says of Orestes and Pylades, that if they really are as noble as they seem, they will be as well satisfied with humble fare as with grand fare. A gentleman of a century ago would not be approved now. A gentleman of to-day in the society of a century ago would be thought to have rowdy manners. Artificial manners are not in the taste of our time; athletics are. The "gentleman" always tends to an arbitrary definition. It appears now that he must have some skill at sports and games. The selective force of the social type of the gentleman is obvious in our own society. The sentiment *noblesse oblige* was once the name for the coercive force exerted on a noble by the code of his class. Now that fixed classes are gone and the gentleman is only defined by the usage and taste of an informal class, it is a term for the duties which go with social superiority of any kind, so far as those duties are prescribed and sanctioned by public opinion.

210. Social standard set by taboos. It may be

still more
important to notice that the standard social type is
defined by
taboos with only social sanctions. The negative side
of *noblesse*
oblige is more important than the positive. A
gentleman is
under more restraints than a non-gentleman. In
the eighteenth
century he patronized cockfights and prize fights,
and he could
get drunk, gamble, tell falsehoods, and deceive
women without
losing caste. He now finds that *noblesse oblige*
forbids all these
things, and that it puts him under disabilities in
politics and
business.